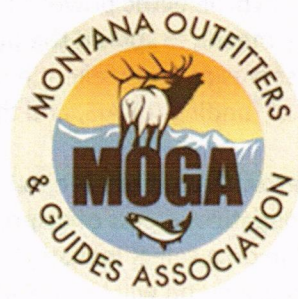


July 25, 2018

Exhibit 15



To Environmental Quality Council

From: Mac Minard, Executive Director  
Montana Outfitters & Guides Association

Date: July 24, 2018

Re: Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) funding proposal--LCaisp

Aquatic Invasive Species funding has been an issue since the 2017 legislative session where a significant tax was applied to the non-resident angler to help fund this program. The Environmental Quality Council (EQC) has been meeting on this issue as have MOGA, FOAM and Walleyes Unlimited.

While we can all agree that the program is necessary, those in the Outfitting industry can also attest that the funding mechanism employed today is neither fair nor in the best interest of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) funding. The Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Pass purchased by anglers that generates about \$3 million per year and declines in 2-day and 10-day non-resident licenses sales can be traced directly to the disproportionate tax on non-resident fishermen. Non-resident 2-day fishing license sales dropped from 130,000 in 2015 to 109,000 in 2017.

The EQC has offered a 2019 funding proposal (LCaisp) that will seek funds from 4 sources: the General Fund, angler and watercraft fees, gas tax revenues from motor boat use, and a NEW Commercial watercraft fee of \$100. Hydroelectric fees are eliminated from this proposal.

**MOGA Position:**

- 1) MOGA continues to support the AIS program to minimize and manage the threat AIS pose to Montana waters, aquatic habitats and infrastructure.
- 2) MOGA seeks a change in the non-resident Aquatic Invasive Species Prevention Pass to make it commensurate with the resident AIS Prevention Pass to mitigate the loss of sales and participation by non-residents.
- 3) This is a Montana problem, not just a fishing problem. All aspects of watercraft are involved, and all end users of hydro power and water sources are affected. Therefore, MOGA supports General Fund support.
- 4) MOGA supports reasonable watercraft fees that include ALL forms that can be a threat to AIS transfer.
- 5) MOGA fully supports funding the AIS Program through a motorized watercraft-generated fuel tax. In meetings with Walleyes unlimited MOGA and FOAM were introduced to this concept and were convinced of its merit.

- 6) MOGA supports continued use of hydroelectric power funds and opposes elimination of this funding source in LCaisp. This is a means to spread the burden among a broad segment of potentially affected citizens and serves as an excellent educational platform. All stakeholders should equally share the burden of funding for AIS, and this unique and innovative source of funding accomplishes this goal.
- 7) MOGA opposes the \$100 Commercial Watercraft fee to help fund the AIS Program. This selective fee will compound the negative effects of disproportionate license fees with non-residents, pose a financial hardship on a select industry that is already a significant partner in generating funding for the AIS Program and will be considered a disincentive to those visiting Montana.